



Morning Alert - Thursday, December 7, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, NTV, and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that President Trump said on Wednesday that the U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and that he has ordered the State Department to begin preparations for relocating the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. TBS led with updates on the decision by the IOC to ban Russian athletes from competing in the Pyeongchang Olympics. Fuji TV reported that the mayor of Iwaizumi in Iwate Prefecture held a press conference on Wednesday regarding allegations that he sexually assaulted a female journalist at a hotel.

Top stories in national dailies included a Supreme Court ruling that TV owners are legally obligated to pay subscription fees to NHK (Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri); President Trump's announcement of his plan to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital (Sankei); and a GOJ plan to raise an additional 100 billion yen in annual revenue through tax proposals that would slash deductions for high income earners (Nikkei).

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israeli capital to appeal to supporters at home

NHK reported this morning on the declaration by President Trump that the U.S. recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. An NHK reporter said the President prioritized appealing to his base over his reputation in the international community because his supporters tend to value how he differs from conventional politicians. Noting that all of President Trump's predecessors refrained from relocating the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and that he also forewent doing so in June, the reporter said the President wanted to avoid losing supporters by putting it off again with the mid-

term election looming. While noting that the President stressed in his speech that his decision is not pro-Israel and he is committed to realizing peace in the Middle East, the reporter said the President's decision is full of contradictions and totally unacceptable from the Palestinian side, adding that the move will make it more difficult to resume the Middle East peace talks. He pointed out that not only the Palestinians but also Islamic nations are reacting sharply to the U.S. decision, saying that increased frustration with and distrust of President Trump will remain in the Islamic world for a long time and may weaken U.S. influence in the Middle East. He concluded by saying that the President will now need to deal with all sorts of difficult problems caused by his decision.

Japan, China agree on implementation of maritime and air communication mechanism

All papers reported on talks held on Tuesday and Wednesday in Shanghai between senior officials of Japan and China on a maritime and air communication mechanism aimed at averting inadvertent clashes in the East China Sea. The idea of establishing the mechanism was first agreed on by Prime Minister Abe and then-Chinese President Wen Jiabao in 2007. The papers wrote that the foreign ministries of Japan and China announced that the two nations have made "positive progress" toward the launch of the mechanism. The papers also wrote that this development is a sign of the improvement in ties between Tokyo and Beijing that has been achieved following Abe's meeting with President Xi in November. Asahi wrote that Japan and China agreed to start implementing the mechanism in the near future by setting up a hotline between SDF and Chinese military officials after reaching a formal agreement between their leaders when Premier Li visits Japan for a trilateral summit with South Korea in the near future. The paper wrote that although attention had been focused on whether the mechanism would cover the Senkaku Islands, Tokyo and Beijing apparently agreed not to mention the islands in their agreement.

Foreign Minister Kono to visit Middle East

Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kono is making arrangements to visit Israel, the Palestinian territories, Turkey, and Oman at the end of this month. The paper wrote that Kono plans to urge both the Israelis and the Palestinians to continue peace talks amid the growing concern over President Trump's plan to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. Kono is hoping to hold talks with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas during his planned trip to the region. This will be Kono's third visit to the Middle East following his trip to Qatar, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt in September and his planned visit to Bahrain, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia in mid-December.

In a related story, Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that Kono spoke by phone with his Saudi Arabian counterpart al-Jubeir on Wednesday to discuss President Trump's plan to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Senior UN official meets with North Korean vice foreign minister

All papers wrote that UN Undersecretary General for Political Affairs Feltman held talks with North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Pak Myong Guk in Pyongyang on Wednesday. At the outset of the meeting, Pak expressed readiness to hold sincere discussions with the UN official. A UNDP representative in Pyongyang was also present at the meeting. Attention is focused on whether the UN official will be able to achieve a breakthrough against the background of the rising tension between the United States and North Korea over the ongoing U.S. military drills with South Korea and the DPRK's recent ICBM launch.

SECURITY

Suga comments on GOJ plan to procure cruise missiles

Mainichi wrote that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga commented at a press conference on Wednesday on a GOJ plan to earmark funds in FY2018 for procuring long-range cruise missiles by saying that the government has a responsibility to study various options in order to maintain peace and defend Japanese lives in view of the severe security environment surrounding Japan. Asked whether the procurement will lead to Japan possessing the ability to attack enemy bases, Suga reportedly said: "Concerning the ability to attack enemy bases, Japan depends on the United States under a division of roles. We have no intention to change our basic role sharing in the future." Nikkei wrote that opposition lawmakers expressed on Wednesday their opposition to the GOJ plan to allocate funds for the procurement of cruise missiles.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador, Defense Minister Onodera discuss DPRK, Japan's introduction of Aegis Ashore

Kyodo and Jiji reported on a meeting between Ambassador Hagerty and Defense Minister Onodera at the Defense Ministry on Wednesday. Kyodo said that Onodera told the Ambassador that North Korea's repeated provocations are unacceptable and that it is necessary to further strengthen the deterrence of the U.S.-Japan alliance. The Ambassador reportedly said U.S.-Japanese cooperation is important. The two officials agreed on the need for the two nations together to further strengthen the pressure on North Korea. Kyodo and Jiji reported that the Ambassador and the defense minister confirmed that Japan and the United States will cooperate on Japan's introduction of the Aegis Ashore system as soon as possible.

ECONOMY

Operator submits 30-year plan for dismantling Monju reactor

All papers wrote that the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, the operator of the Monju prototype fast-breeder nuclear reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, submitted to the Nuclear Regulation Authority on Wednesday a plan for decommissioning the troubled reactor over the next 30 years. The GOJ decided in December last year to scrap the reactor. The operator plans to divide the 30-year period through 2047 into four phases. It will extract nuclear fuel from the reactor core in the first phase,

prepare to decommission the pipes and pumps where sodium coolant has circulated in the second phase, and begin scrapping the reactor in the third phase. However, the operator has not disclosed the detailed processes for the decommissioning. This will be the first time for a fast-breeder reactor to be dismantled in Japan and some 26,700 tons of solid radioactive waste is expected to be generated as a result. The local government is calling on the operator to remove the spent nuclear fuel and sodium from the prefecture swiftly. The papers wrote that there are a number of problems to be resolved in dismantling the reactor, including where to store the spent fuel to be extracted from the reactor core.

SCIENCE

Japan, India to cooperate in lunar exploration

Asahi and Nikkei wrote that JAXA reached an agreement with the Indian Space Research Organization on Wednesday to cooperate in lunar exploration. The two organizations will discuss a possible joint project to explore the surface of the moon for the presence of water, ice, and other resources in the first half of the 2020s.

